TASTE:

AN

EPISTLE

TO A

YOUNG CRITIC.

(Price One Shilling.)

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Proferre quæ ſentiat cur quiſquam liber dubitet?—Malim, mehercule, ſolus inſanire, quam ſobrius i plebis aut patrum deliratiombus ignaviter aſſentari, &c.

LONDON:
Printed for R. GRIFFITHS in *St. Paul's Church-yard.*
MDCCLIII.

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Proferre quæ lentat cur quisquam liber dubitet?—Nitidus, mechercule, fplus infamiæ, quam fobrius plenis aut pictarum deliramentis gravatior effentari, &c.

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RANGE from *Tower-hill* all LONDON to the *Fleet*,
Thence round the *Temple*, t' utmoſt *Groſvenor-ſtreet*:
Take in your Route both *Gray*'s and *Lincoln*'s *Inn*;
Miſs not be ſure, my LORDS and GENTLEMEN;

You'll hardly raiſe, as I with * *Petty* gueſs,
Above twelve thouſand Men of Taſte; unleſs
In deſperate Times a *Connoiſſeur* may paſs.

"A CONNOISSEUR! What's that?" 'Tis hard to ſay:
But you muſt oft amidſt the Fair and Gay
Have ſeen a wou'd-be Rake, a fluttering Fool,
Who ſwears he loves the Sex with all his Soul.
Alas, vain Youth! doſt thou admire ſweet *Jones?*
Thou be gallant without Or Blood or Bones!
You'd ſplit to hear th' inſipid Coxcomb cry
Ah charming *Nanny*! 'tis too much! I die!-----
Die and be d----n'd ſays one, but let me tell ye,
I'll pay the Loſs if ever Rapture kill ye.

'TIS

* Sir *William Petty*, Author of the *Political Arithmetic.*

'Tis eaſy learnt the Art to talk by rote:

At *George*'s 'twill but coſt you half a Groat;

The *Bedford* School at Three-pence is not dear, Sir;

At *White*'s ---- *the Stars inſtruct you* for a Teſter.

But he, whom Nature never meant to ſhare

One Spark of Taſte will never catch it there: ——

Nor no where elſe; howe'er the booby Beau

Grows great with *Pope*, and *Horace*, and *Boileau*.

Good native Taſte, tho' rude, is ſeldom wrong,

Be it in Muſic, Painting, or in Song.

But this, as well as other Faculties,

Improves with Age and ripens by Degrees.

I know, my Dear; 'tis needleſs to deny 't,
You like *Voiture*, you think him wondrous bright:
But ſeven Years hence, your Reliſh more matur'd,
What now delights will hardly be endur'd.
The Boy may live to taſte *Racine*'s fine Charms,
Whom *Lee*'s bald Orb or *Rowe*'s dry Rapture warms:
But he, enfranchis'd from his Tutor's Care,
Who places *Butler* near *Cervantes*' Chair;
Or with *Eraſmus* can admit to vie
Brown of Squab-Hall *of merry Memory*;
Will die a *Gothick* and nod at * *Woden*'s Feaſt,
Th' eternal Winter long, on † *Gregory*'s Breaſt.

LON

* Alluding to the *Gothick* Heaven, *Woden*'s Hall; where the Happy are for ever emplo
in drinking Beer, Mum, and other comfortable Liquors out of the Skulls of thoſe whom t
had ſlain in Battle.

† Pope *Gregory* the VIth, diſtinguiſhed by the name of St. *Gregory*; who in his pious Z
for the Cauſe of barbarous Ignorance and prieſtly Tyranny, did what in him lay to deſtroy
the Remains of Heathen Genius and Learning.

LONG may he ſwill, this Patriarch of the dull,
The drowſy Muſe ——— But touch not *Maro*'s Skull!
His holy barbarous Dotage fought to doom,
Good Heaven! th' immortal Claſſics to the Tomb! ———
Thoſe ſacred Lights ſhall bid new Genius riſe
When all *Rome*'s Saints have rotted from the Skies.
Be theſe your Guides, if at the Ivy Crown
You aim; each Country's Claſſics, and your own.
But chiefly with the Ancients paſs your prime,
And drink *Caſtalio* at the Fountain's brim.
The Man to genuine *Burgundy* bred up
Soon ſtarts the daſh of *Methuen* in his Cup.

THOSE ſovereign Maſters of the Muſes ſkill
Are the true Patterns of good Writing ſtill.
Their Ore was rich and ſeven Times purg'd of Lead;
Their Art ſeem'd Nature, 'twas ſo finely hid.
Tho' born with all the Powers of Writing well,
What Pains it coſt they did not bluſh to tell.
Their Eaſe (my LORDS!) ne'er lowng'd for want of Fire,
Nor did their Rage thro' Affectation tire.
Free from all tawdry and impoſing Glare
They truſted to their native grace of Air.
Rapt'rous and wild the trembling Soul they ſeize,
Or ſly coy Beauties ſteal it by Degrees;
The more you view them ſtill the more they pleaſe.

YET

YET there are Thouſands of ſcholaſtic Merit
Who worm their Senſe out but ne'er taſte their Spirit.
Witneſs each Pedant under *Buſby* bred,
Each Commentator that e'er commented. ——Bravo
You ſcarce can ſeize a Spot of Claſſic Ground,
With leagues of Dutch Morafs ſo floated round.)
Witneſs——but Sir I hold a cautious Pen,
Leſt I ſhould *wrong* ſome *honourable Men.*
They grow Enthuſiaſts too——*'Tis true! 'tis pity!*
But 'tis not every Lunatic that's witty.†
Some have run *Maro*-and ſome *Milton*-mad,
Aſhley once turn'd a ſolid † Barber's Head:

Hear

† It ſeems this really happened in a part of our Iſland, where the *Characteriſtics* are much
lied.

Hear all that's ſaid or printed if you can,
Aſhley has turn'd more ſolid Heads than one.

Let ſuch admire each great or ſpecious Name;
For right or wrong the Joy to them's the ſame.

"Right!" Yes a thouſand Times.——Each Fool has heard
That *Homer* was a wonder of a Bard.

Deſpiſe them civilly with all my Heart——
But to convince them is a deſperate Part.

Why ſhould you teize one for what ſecret Cauſe,
One doats on *Horace*, or on *Hudibras*?

'Tis cruel, Sir, 'tis needleſs, to endeavour
To teach a Sot of Taſte he knows no flavour.

To disunite I neither wish nor hope
A stubborn Blockhead from his fav'rite Fop.
Yes---Fop I say, were *Maro*'s self before 'em,
For *Maro*'s self grows dull as they pore o'er him.

But hear their Raptures o'er some specious Rhime
Dub'd by the musk'd and greasy Mob sublime.
For Spleen's dear sake hear how a Coxcomb prates
As clam'rous o'er his Joys as fifty Cats;
"*Music has Charms to sooth a savage Breast,*
To soften Rocks, and Oaks," and all the rest:
"*I've heard*"---Bless these long Ears!--- "Heav'ns what
a Strain!
"Good God! What Thunders burst in this *Campaign!*

" Hark *Waller* warbles! Ah! how ſweetly killing!
" Then that inimitable *Splendid Shilling!*
" *Rowe* breathes all *Shakeſpear* here!---That Ode of *Prior*
" Is *Spencer* quite! egad his very fire!---
" As like"---Yes faith! as Gum-flowers to the Roſe,
Or as to *Claret* flat *Minorca*'s doſe;
As like as (if I am not groſly wrong)
Erle Robert's *Mice* to aught e'er *Chaucer* ſung.

READ boldly, and unprejudic'd peruſe
Each fav'rite Modern, ev'n each ancient Muſe.
With all the comic Salt and tragic Rage
The great ſtupendous Genius of our Stage,

Boaſt

Boaſt of our Iſland, Pride of human-kind,
Had Faults to which the *Boxes* are not blind.
His frailities are to ev'ry Goſſip known:
Yet *Milton*'s Pedantries not ſhock the Town.
Ne'er be the Dupe of Names, however high;
For ſome outlive good Parts, ſome miſapply.
Each elegant *Spectator* you admire;
But muſt you therefore ſwear by *Cato*'s Fire?
Maſques for the Court, and oft a clumſey Jeſt,
Diſgrac'd the Muſe that wrought the *Alchemiſt*.
" But to the Ancients." Faith! I am not clear,
For all the ſmooth round Type of *Elzevir*,
That ev'ry Work that laſts, in Proſe or Song,
Two thouſand Years, deſerves to laſt ſo long.

For not to mention ſome eternal Blades

Known only now in th' Academic Shades,

(Thoſe ſacred Groves where raptur'd Spirits ſtray,

And in word-hunting waſte the live-long Day)

Ancients whom none but curious Critics ſcan,

Do, read * *Meſſala*'s Praiſes if you can.

Ah! who but feels the ſweet contagious Smart

While ſoft *Tibullus* pours his tender Heart?

With him the Loves and Muſes melt in Tears;

But not a Word of ſome Hexameters.

" You grow ſo ſqueamiſh and ſo dev'liſh dry

" You'll call *Lucretius* vapid next." Not I.

Some

* A Poem of *Tibullus*'s in hexameter Verſe; as yawning and inſipid as his Elegies are tender and natural.

Some find him tedious, others think him lame;
But if he laggs, his Subject is to blame.
Rough weary Roads thro' barren Wilds he tried,
Yet ſtill he marches with true Roman Pride:
By fits a Meteor, gorgeous, rapid, bright,
He ſtreams athwart the Philoſophic Night.
Find you in *Horace* no inſipid Odes?----
He dar'd to tell us *Homer* ſometimes nods;
And but for ſuch a Critic's hardy Skill
Homer might ſlumber unſuſpected ſtill.

TASTELESS, implicit, indolent and tame,
At ſecond hand we chiefly praiſe or blame.

Hence 'tis, for elſe one knows not why nor how,
Some Authors flouriſh for a Year or two:
For many ſome, more wond'rous ſtill to tell;
Farquhar yet lingers on the Brink of Hell.
Of ſolid Merit others pine unknown;
At firſt *Monimia* fail'd to melt the Town:
Sunk in dead Night the Giant *Milton* lay
'Till *Sommer*'s Hand produc'd him to the Day.
But, Thanks to Heav'n and *Addiſon*'s good Grace,
Now ev'ry Fop is charm'd with *Chevy Chaſe*.

SPECIOUS and ſage, the Sovereign of the Flock
Led to the Downs, or from the wave-worn Rock

Reluctant hurl'd, the tame implicit Train
Or crop the Downs, or headlong ſeek the Main.
As blindly we our ſolemn Leaders follow,
And good, and bad, and execrable ſwallow.

JUDGE for yourſelf; nor wait with timid Phlegm
'Till ſome illuſtrious Pedant hum or hem.
The Lords who ſtarv'd old *Ben* were learndly fond
Of *Chaucer*, whom with bungling Toil they conn'd.
Their Sons, whoſe Ears bold *Milton* could not ſeize,
Would laugh o'er *Ben* like mad, and ſnuff and ſneeze,
And ſwear, and ſeem as tickled as you pleaſe.
Their Spawn, the Pride of this ſublimer Age,
Feel to the Toes and Horns grave *Milton*'s Rage.

Tho' liv'd he now he might appeal with Scorn
To Lords, Knights, 'Squires and Doctors, yet unborn;
Or juſtly mad to MOLOCH's burning Fane
Devote the choiceſt Children of his Brain.
Judge for yourſelf; and as you find report
Of Wit as freely as of Beef or Port.
Zounds! ſhall a pert or bluff important Wight,
Whoſe Brain is fancileſs, whoſe Blood is white;
A mumbling Ape of Taſte; preſcribe us Laws
To try the Poets, for no better Cauſe
Than that he boaſts *per Ann.* Ten Thouſand clear,
Yelps in the Houſe, or barely ſits a Peer?
For ſhame! for ſhame! the liberal *Britiſh* Soul
To ſtoop to any ſtale Dictator's Rule!

I may be wrong, and often am no doubt,
But right or wrong with Friends with Foes 'twill out.
Thus 'tis perhaps my Fault if I complain
Of trite Invention and a flimsy Vein,
Tame Characters, unintereſting, jejune,
And Paſſions drily copied from * *Le Brun.*
For I would rather never judge than wrong
That Friend of all Men, generous *Fenelon.*
But in the Name of Goodneſs, can I be
The Dupe of Charms I never yet could ſee?

* Firſt Painter to *Lewis* XIV. who, to ſpeak in faſhionable French Engliſh, *called himſelf* LEWIS THE GREAT. Our Sovereign Lords the Paſſions, *Love*, *Rage*, *Deſpair*, &c. were graciouſly pleaſed to ſit to him in their turns for their Portraits: which he was generous enough to communicate to the Public; to the great improvement, no doubt, of Hiſtory-Painting. It was he who they ſay poiſoned *Le Sueur*; who, without half his Advantages in many other Reſpects, was ſo unreaſonable and provoking as to diſplay a Genius with which his own could ſtand no Compariſon. And it was he and his Gothic Diſciples, who, with ſly Scratches defac'd the moſt maſterly of this *Le Sueur*'s Performances, as often as their barbarous Envy could ſnugly reach them. Yet after all theſe Atchievements he died in his Bed! A Cataſtrophe which could not have happened to him in a Country like this, where the *fine Arts* are as zealouſly and judiciouſly patroniſed as they are well underſtood.

And then to flatter where there's no Reward——

Better be any Patron-hunting Bard,

Who half our Lords with filthy Praiſe beſmears,

And ſing an Anthem to ALL MINISTERS:

Taſte th' Attic Salt in ev'ry Peer's poor Rebus,

And crown each Gothic Idol for a *Phœbus*.

ALAS! ſo far from Free, ſo far from Brave

We dare not ſhew the little Taſte we have.

With us you'll ſee ev'n Vanity controul

The moſt refin'd Senſations of the Soul.

Sad *Otway*'s Scenes, great *Shakeſpear*'s we defy,

" Lard Madam! 'tis ſo unpolite to cry!——

" For

"For ſhame, my Dear! d'ye credit all this Stuff?——

"I vow——well, this is innocent enough?"

At *Athens* long ago, the Ladies——(married)

Dreamt not they miſbehav'd tho' they miſcarried,

When a wild Poet with licentious Rage

Turn'd fifty Furies looſe upon the Stage.

THEY were ſo tender and ſo eaſy mov'd,

Heav'ns! how the *Grecian* Ladies muſt have lov'd!

For all the fine Senſations ſtill have dwelt,

Perhaps, where one was exquiſitely felt.

Thus he who heavenly *Maro* truly feels

Stands fix'd on *Raphael*, and at *Handel* thrills.

The

The groſſer Senſes too, the Taſte, the Smell,
Are likely trueſt where the Fine prevail:
Who doubts that *Horace* muſt have cater'd well?
Friend, I'm a ſhrewd Obſerver, and will gueſs
What Books you doat on from your fav'rite Meſs.
Brown and *L'Eſtrange* will ſurely charm whom e'er
The frothy Pertneſs ſtrikes of weak Small-Beer.
Who ſteeps the Calves fat Loin in greaſy Sauce
Will hardly loath the Praiſe that baſtes an Aſs.
And who devours Scotcht Collops ſcorns not any
Inſipid, fulſome, trafhy Miſcellany.

But I am ſick of Pen and Ink, and you
Will find this Letter long enough. Adieu!

F I N I S.